CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

Aspects which characterise the broader context and current situation of design practice in South Africa receive a fair amount of consideration in this edition of *Image & Text*. A re-emphasis on the importance of design in both economic and social arenas, greater international acceptance and the opening up of global markets in the aftermath of sanctions all serve to highlight problems and challenges facing design. The present economic climate, the level of industrialisation, little understanding of the impact of design and the general standard of design awareness are listed as impediments to the development of design.

While designers have always been good at identifying problems and major issues confronting design, the tendency has been to suggest that solutions must come from other quarters. These suggestions are usually sound and valid, but often little is said about the role and responsibilities designers themselves must increasingly assume if they wish the strategic importance of design to receive corporate and national recognition. The most appropriate and best people to look after the interests of design and designers, must after all be designers themselves.

It is therefore encouraging to see a trend emerging in which South African designers are reassessing their role and articulating potential contributions which reach beyond the traditional role and boundaries of design. Designers are realising that they need to increasingly take a more proactive stance in promoting an understanding of design and in securing credible positions for themselves in the corporate and public spheres. The importance of encouraging and participating in a design dialogue is also being seen as essential to fostering greater understanding and changing attitudes to design.

It seems a great pity that this progress is hindered by the lack of unity in the design industry and a reluctance to establish a strong representative professional body. A united front in conjunction with better education and industrial training, and the managerial skill and competence to develop and exploit design resources are crucial ingredients of a future to which designers should commit their energies.

MIND AND EYE OPENER

While the editors are mindful of the importance of providing in-depth information and analyses of design issues, they would also like the Journal to serve as a stimulant for creative people. In this edition, two leading graphic designers were given *carte blanche* to design their own articles. Jan Erasmus of Cyber Graphics took his theme of deconstruction through to a logical conclusion in a presentation designed to reflect content. Roy Clucas of Grapplegroup Design, chose to profile himself in his own indubitable fashion!